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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 29,2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 29, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

MILLIYET / EVRENSEL / CUMHURIYET / ZAMAN: The Foreign Ministry and the General Staff will prepare and submit a report about Incirlik airbase to Prime Minister Erdogan. The U.S. reportedly wants to use the airbase as a logistics hub without putting forward a time limitation for its use and without having to provide prior notice to Turkish authorities. The U.S. also reportedly wants no restrictions to be imposed on the direction of flights and destinations to and from the airbase. The Turkish response about the airbase is pending PM Erdogan's decision.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: A group of 23 human shield volunteers, aiming to end military operations and conflict in the Cudi Mountains of Sirnak, set off for Sirnak from Adana, Antep and Hatay. The group's car was reportedly stopped at the exit of Diyarbakir province and searched by soldiers. The car was (allegedly) stopped for the second time thirty-five kilometers from Mardin to be searched once again; identity cards of the group were checked, as well.

SABAH (GUNEY): Sukru Sariisik, the Second Army Commander; Ayhan Tas, the Sixth Army Corps Commander; Huseyin Senturk, the 39th Mechanized Brigadier General; and Idris Sahin, the Garrison Commander, paid a visit to Abdulkadir Sari, the Hatay Governor.

OZGUR GUNDEM: During the first Alawi Conference held in Ankara, participants discussed topics including participation in the activities of NGOs, nurturing democratic Alawi organizations, the state's mandatory religious instruction and the state's Religious Affairs Directorate. The idea to unite Alawi organizations under a single umbrella and to act under a federal union was also discussed.

CUMHURIYET: During his meetings with Elazig's Deputy Governor and Mayor as well as with the Rector of Firat University, Wolf-Ruthart Born, German Ambassador to Ankara, said that German Government supported Turkey's endeavors to join the EU. When asked about the alleged scenes of European MPs supporting the PKK during Newruz celebrations, Born said that the PKK is a terrorist organization and those who follow the PKK are terrorists.

EKSPRES / BOLGE: Contrary to rumors floating in the political circles of Adana, Abdullah Caliskan, Adana MP from AKP (Justice and Development Party), announced that he will not sever his ties with his party. This week AKP MPs seemed to resume amicable terms with Caliskan after last week's disputes among them about the economic status of Turkey.

CUMHURIYET: Mervan Gul, Mayor of Siirt, had originally been elected to Parliament before becoming Mayor, but vacated his parliament seat to allow PM Erdogan to run in a 2003 by-election. Recently however, Mervan Gul has been accused of nepotism. According to reports of an Audit Commission consisting of municipality assembly members, Gul has allegedly provided trillions of lira worth of resources unlawfully to his kin.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Ozgur Gundem claims that the way in which the youth were taken into custody and arrested after their recent attempt to dishonor the Turkish flag was contrary to Convention on Children's Rights, Beijing Rules and domestic law.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Urfa's Provincial Directorate of Education (allegedly) issued a statement that prohibits students, teachers and staff from joining any unauthorized demonstrations, meetings and activities of non-governmental organizations. The statement was sent to all of the primary schools in the province.

EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Attorney Hamza Yilmaz applied to the Ministry of Interior to change the name of his hometown Arslankasi, in Keban district of Elazig, to "Niskusagi." Yilmaz, claiming that the law had been breached when his town's name was changed to "Arslankasi" in the 1960s, alleged that the change had been part of the state's assimilation policy.

CUMHURIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM: Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey will come to Turkey as the guest of her Turkish

counterpart Abdullah G|l. Calmy-Rey plans to visit Istanbul, Ankara and Diyarbakir. In Diyarbakir, Calmy-Rey will reportedly visit Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir, and members of the Human Rights Association.

HURRIYET / CUMHURİYET / EKSPRES / SABAH (GUNEY): In Mersin, Gokhan Kiziltepe, the police officer who saved the flag from being stepped on and burned in Newruz celebrations, was given his prize and certificate of honor by Ministry of Interior officials and the Mersin Governor. Kiziltepe donated the twenty-four salary installments he was awarded to the Martyrs and Veterans Solidarity Association. During his address to the audience, Mehmet Ekizer, Deputy Director of the Mersin Security Directorate, accused DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) of not singing the Turkish National Anthem and hanging the Turkish flag during their party meetings and congresses.

ZAMAN / SABAH / OZGUR GUNDEM: Mehmet Agar, DYP (True Path Party) leader, stated in a meeting held in Diyarbakir, "We will not allow anybody to separate the Turks and Kurds, to politically abuse the sacred values of Turkish nation, to draw this country into a chaotic battleground. The red color in the flag represents, among other things, the blood of the people -- including those of eastern and southeastern Turkey -- who died for this country." However, Ozgur Gundem criticizes Agar, who is a former National Security Director, as being one of the engineers of the conflict that started in the southeastern region in 1993.

ZAMAN: Zaman reports that it was discovered that Alaattin Erdogan, Head of the DEHAP delegation sent to Mersin to investigate the flag-insult incident, had served a prison sentence in the past for showing disrespect the Turkish flag in Mersin. Alaattin Erdogan was the Provincial Chairperson of the former HADEP (People's Democracy Party) in Mersin and the Adana State Security Court allegedly found him guilty of stepping over the Turkish flag and throwing it into the wastebasket in 1998.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. SABAH (GUNEY) / EKSPRES / BOLGE / HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Suleyman Onatca, Chairperson of the Adana Industrialists and Businessmen Association, announced that his visits with Syrian and Jordanian authorities last week were very fruitful in terms of economic relations. Onatca said that his visits to Jordan's Minister of Industry, Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce, and Chairperson of the Industrialists and Businessmen Association aimed to enhance Adana's trade relations with Middle Eastern markets.

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